

STAT

MINNESOTA DAILY
University of Minnesota
27 February 1981

Secret inquirer

The CIA has a history of involvement within the academic community. As to whether such involvement is appropriate, we find University President C. Peter Magrath's statement heartening: "I don't think universities should officially cooperate with the intelligence community." But we find unofficial cooperation even more objectionable. CIA operatives were common on campuses during the 1950s red scare and also in the 1960s and 1970s during the anti-war demonstrations. Magrath's meeting with former CIA Director Stansfield Turner has brought up the issue once again. Magrath's amnesia over what was discussed at that meeting is curious. Even more curious is his request that the CIA keep his presence at the meeting a secret. It tends to point toward that unofficial cooperation for which the CIA is well known. As an equal opportunity employer, the CIA has a right to recruit on campus—openly. This should be the limit of official cooperation. Limits of unofficial cooperation are harder to define.

A common CIA practice is to question University professors after they have returned from research abroad. Many professors have been approached by the CIA after and sometimes before they travel overseas to study and conduct research. Some professors decline to meet with the CIA. Others agree, but some of the professors who meet with intelligence officials do so because they fear for their academic careers—they do not want to be in a position of non-cooperation with a governmental agency. One University professor was warned not to discuss his CIA visit with anyone. Other University professors voice concern over how secretive collaboration with the CIA could hinder their research abroad. Professors in other countries may be reluctant to share research with their U.S. counterparts if they know the CIA will be interviewing these professors

when they return to the United States.

Ninety percent of intelligence gathering is observation. There is no reason why the CIA's questions concerning the research or expertise of a professor cannot be asked in an open environment. But the CIA does pose questions concerning a professor's personal, political views—which explains the need for secret meetings. Questions of personal politics are inappropriate.

There is also the question of the CIA paying students as informants. The CIA has a record of paying students to spy on other students—one of the agency's more lucrative ventures. The presence of informants on an open campus should not be condoned—officially or unofficially—for it only serves to inhibit the learning process.

For a university to be a true learning institution it must maintain an open environment. Universities must be able to foster independent study and inquiry as well as protect the independence of critic and scholar. The CIA's secrecy within the University undermines a free environment. It becomes difficult for professors and students to inquire about issues if they fear that the CIA is looking over their shoulders. The University, rather than being an independent inquirer, begins to work for the state.

If professors wish to work with the CIA they should do so openly. It seems only fair to let their colleagues know that they have CIA credentials and those working for the agency should be placed on the CIA payroll for the research they conduct. It is not appropriate for professors to be playing a covert double role—studying abroad under the guise of an academician and also "observing" for the CIA.

Secret interviews, informants on campus, and Magrath's esoteric dealings with the CIA undermine the open environment of a university. The atmosphere that surrounds the CIA inhibits academicians, professors and students limit their critical study of certain politically "hot" issues. Secrecy limits criticism of the status quo, for one becomes conscious that criticism may be outside the acceptable standards. When this occurs, we all become less free.